

THE SARAJEVO ASSASSINATION AND FREEMASONRY

THE SERAJEVO CRIME AND FREEMASONRY

On the 15th September 1912 the *Revue internationale des Sociétés secrètes*, edited by Monseigneur Jouin, published the following lines :

Perhaps light will be shed one day on these words of a high Swiss freemason on the subject of the Heir to the throne of Austria : « He is a remarkable man ; it is a pity that he is condemned, he will die on the steps of the throne » ¹.

1. *Revue internationale des sociétés secrètes*, 8, avenue Portalis. Paris, 15th september 1912, pp. 787-88.

On the 28th June 1914 the Archduke, heir to the crown of the Austrian monarchy, and his wife succumbed to the bullets of Serbian freemasons.

On the 12th October one of the assassins, Cabrinovic unconcernedly said to the judges of the military court : « In freemasonry it is allowed to kill. »

Such are in short the disquieting elements underneath the political crime which let loose the war.

Let us briefly recall the facts.

The Archduke and Archduchess arrived during an official tour at Serajevo, a small town of Bosnia-Herzegovina near the Serbian frontier. They were occupying the back seats in a motor-car, with General Potiorek seated opposite them, and count Harrach beside the chauffeur. The car was proceeding slowly on the Appel quay along the Miljacka river on its way to the town hall. Distributed among the crowd were eight assassins armed with bombs and revolvers, of whom the most resolute were Cabrinovic, Princip and Grabez.

Opposite the Cumurja bridge Cabrinovic threw his bomb. It fell on the car and then rolled to the ground where it exploded, wounding several persons including the occupants of the car immediately following. The Archduke had his car stopped in order to inquire about the wounded, and then the programme arranged upon was continued. When the reception at the town hall was ended, count Harrach placed himself for the return journey standing on the left hand step of the car, so as to protect their Highnesses from an attempt upon them from that side. But on this occasion it came from the right. At the corner of Francis-Joseph street, the car stopped just in front of one of the assassins, Princip, who fired at close range several shots from an automatic.

Neither the Archduke nor his wife moved, but an instant after, the Archduchess collapsed quietly on her husband's shoulder. Count Harrach heard the latter say softly : « Sophie, Sophie, do not die. Live for the sake of our children » he remained quietly seated supporting the archduchess ; a little blood appeared upon his lips, and, to the question of count Harrach, he repeated several times in a weakening voice : « It is nothing, it is nothing. » Then in his turn he lost consciousness. The palace of the governor was reached. The two bodies were quickly carried to a bed on the first floor, but the doctors who rushed immediately in attendance could only declare that death had already taken place.

The drama was at end. It had lasted a few minutes, a few short minutes which were to shake the world.

The crime had germinated in strange minds which M. Kohler thus describes in the preface of the shorthand report of the trial¹.

It was a purely Russian atmosphere which predominated here : nihilist, anarchist and terrorist, in conflict with God and with the world, against all established order. Some positive ideas certainly emerged, such as that of the unification of the Serb and Serbo-Croat populations ; but these ideas were so indefinite and vague that they led to negative conclusions and finally ended in hatred of Austria and in the determination to destroy this great Kingdom. It is a wholly Slav Byzantine psychology which one finds here, violent momentary excitement, dislike of all regular work, alarming mania of destruction, and the poison (of revolutionary propaganda) would never have produced such results in German or Latin brains.

1. Der Prozess gegen die attentäter von Serajevo. Shorthand report of the trial compiled by prof. Pharos. Deckers verlag. Berlin, 1918.

Twenty accused persons appeared on the 12th October 1914 before the military court at Serajevo. Eight were directly concerned in the murder. The four most active participants were Princip, Cabrinovic, Grabez and Illic. All were young men from 18 to 20 years old, mostly students. Princip was a Jew¹.

From the interrogation of the accused it became quite clear that at the beginning none of them knew exactly whom he wished to kill nor why he would kill him. They were all agreed upon killing someone, but whom and why seem to have been quite secondary considerations. In principle they considered that the Slav populations of Austria-Hungary, and especially those of Bosnia, were being oppressed for the benefit of the German and Hungarian populations, and that it was necessary to make an example. In reality it seems from their evidence that the true sentiment which actuated them was hatred of the monarchy; all felt instinctively that the strong personality of the Archduke Franz-Ferdinand barred the way to revolution and a common hatred, uniting these revolutionaries of various and often opposite tendencies, rapidly brought them to agreement.

Some passages of the trial are typical of this.

THE PRESIDENT. — Did you believe that Slavs of southern Austria-Hungary would gain any advantage from your act?

GRABEZ. — I believed that the southern Slavs, who nearly all pay both money taxes and the blood tax, would obtain at least the most essential rights.

1. Illic and two other accused were condemned to death and hanged on the 2nd February 1915. Princip, Cabrinovic and Grabez, being under 20 years old, were sentenced to 20 years imprisonment. The two latter died in prison.

THE PRESIDENT. — What are then in your opinion these most essential rights ?

GRABEZ. — I do not know them very well myself.

THE PRESIDENT. — Then why use empty phrases ? ¹

But as Princip said frankly they were all agreed upon the idea of an assassination.

PRINCIP. — We were agreed upon the choice of means for helping the southern Slavs.

THE PRESIDENT. — What were those means ?

PRINCIP. — Murder ; the disappearance of all those who were opposed to the realization of Pan-Slavia and who are unjust to the people ².

Behind the Narodna, we have vaguely perceived the influence of international freemasonry. Certain passages of the interrogations during the trial brought some light on this point.

CABRINOVIC. — He (Casimirovic) is a freemason, even in some degree one of their chiefs. He travelled abroad immediately (after the men had offered themselves to carry out the assassination). He went to Russia, France and Buda-Pesth. Every time when I asked Ciganovic how far our projects had advanced, he replied that I should know when Casimirovic should return. About this time Ciganovic also told me that the freemasons had already condemned to death the heir to the throne two years ago, but that they had not found men to carry out their judgment. Later when he gave me the automatic revolver and the cartridges, he said :

That man came back last evening from Buda-Pesth. I knew that he had made the journey in connection with our undertaking and that he had conferred abroad with certain circles.

1. Pharos Shorthand report of the trial, p. 46.

2. Idem, p. 32.

THE PRESIDENT. — Are you not simply spinning a yarn ?

CABRINOVIC. — It is the pure truth and a hundred times truer than your Narodna Odbrana documents.

At another part of the trial, the defending counsel Premusic speaking to Cabrinovic, asked the following question : Have you read the books of Rosic ?

CABRINOVIC. — I have read his treatise on freemasonry.

PREMUSIC. — Where these books distributed in Belgrade ?

CABRINOVIC. — I set them in type as a printer.

PREMUSIC. — Tell me, do you believe in God or anything ?

CABRINOVIC. — No.

PREMUSIC. — Are you a mason ?

CABRINOVIC. — (Confused, after a moment's silence and speaking loudly) Why do you ask me that ? I cannot answer you on that subject.

PREMUSIC. — Is Tankosic a mason ?

CABRINOVIC. — (Again after a silence). Yes, and Ciganovic also.

THE PRESIDENT. — From which it follows that you also are a mason, for a freemason never admits to anyone but another mason that he belongs to that society.

CABRINOVIC. — Please do not ask me about that subject for I shall not reply.

There is yet another passage in the trial.

THE PRESIDENT. — Tell me something more about the motives.

Did you know before deciding to attempt the assassination that Tankosic and Ciganovic were freemasons ? Had the fact of you and they being freemasons an influence on your resolve ?

CABRINOVIC. — Yes.

THE PRESIDENT. — Did you receive from them the mission to carry out the assassination ?

CABRINOVIC. — I received from no one the mission to carry out the assassination. Freemasonry had to do with it because it strengthened me in my intention. In freemasonry it is permitted to kill. Ciganovic told me that the freemasons had condemned to death the Archduke Franz Ferdinand more than a year before.

THE PRESIDENT. — Did he tell you that from the very beginning or only after you spoke to him of your wish to carry out the assassination ?

CABRINOVIC. — We had already spoken about freemasonry but he said nothing to me of the condemnation to death before we had quite decided to carry out the assassination¹.

The following passage is from the interrogation of Princip who fired the fatal shots at the Archduke.

THE PRESIDENT. — Did you speak about freemasonry with Ciganovic ?

PRINCIP (insolently). — Why ask me that ?

THE PRESIDENT. — I ask because I must know. Did you speak to him about it or not ?

PRINCIP. — Yes, Ciganovic told me that he was a freemason.

THE PRESIDENT. — When did he tell you that ?

PRINCIP. — He told me when I was asking about the means of carrying out the assassination. He added that he would speak with a certain person and that he would receive the necessary means. On another occasion, he told me that the heir to the throne had been condemned to death in a masonic lodge.

THE PRESIDENT. — And are you also a freemason ?

PRINCIP. — Why that question ? I shall not reply. (After a short silence) : No.

THE PRESIDENT. — Is Cabrinovic a mason ?

1. Pharos Shorthand report, p. 14.

PRINCIP. — I do not know. Perhaps he is. He told me once that he was going to join a lodge ¹.

In the tempest of the war this trial passed unnoticed. The silence of the press was perhaps not entirely due to chance. It was in the interests of many people that there should be silence and there are means to obtain it. But the war is over and since then some curious persons or simply people who love their country, have not been satisfied with the explanations given. Thus recently one of them has brought forward some new light on the subject, and the importance of his personality gives weight to his words. This person is Ludendorff former General Commanding in Chief of the German armies

Here is the translation of the principal passages leaving aside those which are of interest only to the Germans ² :

The freemason Kothner of the grand territorial lodge of Germany, had, on the 28th October 1911 at 11.15 A.-M., a long conversation with the grand master of the order, count Dohna Schledien, in the apartment of the order of this masonic « great power », 12 Eisenacher strasse, Berlin. He spoke to him in the embrasure of the window and, according to his own words, communicated what follows :

« Being, at first, frank and credulous I made some discoveries during the year 1911 in the lodges of other towns abroad, which disturbed me greatly. I came by chance upon proofs that freemasonry was preparing something terrible against Germany. I overheard certain imprudent remarks which gave me a glimpse of the plan to assassinate the Archduke Franz-Ferdinand, of the world war, of the fall of thrones

1. Pharos Shorthand report, p. 33.

2. Ludendorff : *Kriegshetze und Volkermördern*, p. 170 onwards. München, 1928.

and altars, and of all that has since happened ¹.

Upon this terrible discovery I went to the only competent person, the grand master count Dohna Schlodien, and told him what I had heard with my own ears and seen with my own eyes. But he seemed not to hear. This conversation which ought to have led to a decisive rupture with all the grand lodges abroad and some lodges at Rome (these also were part of the fraternal chain of the conspirators against Germany), ended on the categorical reply of the grand master : there is only one freemasonry. »

The Grand territorial lodge of Germany, under the Grand Master Dr Müllendorf, tried by every means to force Herr Kothner to retract the admission of this conversation. But his historic declarations shows in a gleam of light to the lay world the crimes and inter-relations of masonry. The mason Kothner has indeed retracted all that he could, except only the above declaration, which he expressly maintained in a letter addressed in the year 1926 to the Grand Master Dr Müllendorf. He stresses that he made a communication to count Dohna, which ought to have given him clear proof that the freemasons of the grand Hungarian recognized Lodge had exercised criminal activity against Germany and against all the peoples.

Regarding the conduct of the mason count Dohna, who, following upon the communication made to him took no steps to inform the government and the German people, the mason Kothner adds that his official grand master count Dohna « protected the Jewish freemasons, was obliged to protect them, held by some international tie unknown to me ».

1. Ludendorff and Kothner see the matter from the German point of view, but as they present it, it is not quite exact. Freemasonry, an international organisation, pursues an international aim, which is in its very essence in contradiction with the national tendencies of every country. This is not specially so for Germany. Freemasonry urged the assassination of Franz Ferdinand not because he was an Austrian-German, but because he was an obstacle to the international revolutionary aim of freemasonry.

The mason Kothner had also entrusted his brother-in-law major Coler, since killed in the war, with the task of transmitting this communication to the general staff of the army. It never reached me.

Elsewhere count Czernin relates in his book : *Im Welt-Kriege. — In the world war* — :

« The Archduke knew quite well that the risk of an attempt on his life was imminent. A year before the war, he informed me that the freemasons had resolved his death. He also told me the town where that decision was said to have been taken. — I have since forgotten it — and mentioned the names of several Hungarian and Austrian politicians who probably knew something about it.

Such are the facts.

It may be said that these predictions were written after the event, that these proofs are from a German and therefore interested source, and that Ludendorff is an « exalté ».

But Ludendorff is not the only one who has spoken. Gabrinovic was not a German, he who said : « In freemasonry it is allowed to kill. And whatever may be said nothing can efface that short sentence written in Paris on the 15th September 1912 : « He is a remarkable man ; it is a pity he is condemned. He will die on the steps of the throne. »

FREEMASONRY AGAINST CENTRAL MONARCHIES

At the international congress of freemasonry at Paris, in April 1917, one of the subjects of the deliberation was : How can a strong movement be provoked in Germany against the monarchy, since the basis of peace must be the deposition of William II and Charles I. All the papers at once expressed this idea in every